

The challenges in developing VET competencies in e-commerce

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E-commerce is an important national issue, as it may provide the overarching set of business principles and practices needed to drive Australia in the global, networked economy. This paper reports on the evaluation in 2000-2001 of an innovative project funded by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to develop competencies and qualifications in e-commerce. The project is a response to *E-competent Australia* (Mitchell, ANTA, 2000), which argued that it was both possible and important to identify competencies in e-commerce. *E-competent Australia* also noted the huge demand for VET courses in e-commerce and the need to design competencies carefully.

The formative evaluation of the ANTA project shows that the development of competencies and qualifications in e-commerce is challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is ongoing, international debate about the meaning of the term e-commerce. Secondly, the field of e-commerce is fluid, due to the continual development of new technologies that enable the creation of new business processes. Thirdly, the field of e-commerce is in flux, evidenced by the failure of many business models during 2000 and the emergence of new business models. This evaluation study highlights the complexities faced by VET course designers working on the leading edge.